Nelson Mandela in His Own Words

a Common-Core activity

Objective: Students will be able to cite evidence of Nelson Mandela’s beliefs in excerpts of speeches he gave in 1964 and 1996.

Overview: Nelson Mandela’s beliefs were critical in accomplishing the goals of the African National Congress to end the unjust practice of apartheid in South Africa. Although he adapted his approach to meet the challenges he faced at different points in his life, his beliefs remained remarkably consistent. By examining two short excerpts from two of his speeches—one given in 1964 and one in 1996—students can see what he believed at two different times in his life. In 1964, he was on trial for sabotage and spoke to defend his actions in the context of his struggles against an oppressive white government. In 1996, he was President and spoke about the challenge of healing the wounds of a nation emerging from the nightmare of apartheid.

Opening: Begin by asking students to answer and discuss these questions:

1. What do we mean when we say a person has beliefs?
2. What are your beliefs?
3. How do you put your beliefs into action?

Introduction: Distribute the graphic organizer and discuss with students Mandela’s beliefs. Make sure students understand each of his beliefs, preferably by grouping students and having them reciprocally teach each other.

Activity: Distribute the speech excerpts to students and give them time to read them and discuss them with their classmates. Working in groups, students complete the graphic organizer, citing evidence from the texts. Evidence could either be summarizations or quotations from the speeches with explanations.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Working alone or with partners, read the excerpts of speeches by Nelson Mandela provided. Then, find and cite evidence from these texts of Mandela’s beliefs.

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| **Mandela’s Beliefs** | **Evidence from the Texts** |
| Remember that leaders are people like you and me |  |
| Involve young people in struggles for peace, justice, and democracy |  |
| “Speak truth to power” (don’t fear telling the truth to those in power) |  |
| Show balance and elegance in your arguments against your enemies |  |
| Be consistent |  |
| Believe that when the truth is exposed, people will make good choices |  |
| Don’t just dream a better tomorrow—make it happen |  |
| Be real and true to yourself in your behavior and approach |  |
| Work with others in solidarity, not in charity |  |

An ideal for which I am prepared to die

This is an excerpt of a statement Mandela made from the dock at the opening of his trial on charges of sabotage, Supreme court of South Africa, Pretoria, April 20 1964.

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| A government which uses force to maintain its rule teaches the oppressed to use force to oppose it. I came to the conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be unrealistic to continue preaching peace and non-violence. This conclusion was not easily arrived at. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, that the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle. I can only say that I felt morally obliged to do what I did.  Four forms of violence were possible. There is sabotage, there is guerrilla warfare, there is terrorism, and there is open revolution. We chose to adopt the first. Sabotage did not involve loss of life, and it offered the best hope for future race relations. Bitterness would be kept to a minimum and, if the policy bore fruit, democratic government could become a reality.…  We felt it our duty to make preparations to use force in order to defend ourselves against force. We decided, therefore to make provision for the possibility of guerrilla warfare. All whites undergo compulsory military training, but no such training was given to Africans. It was in our view essential to build up a nucleus of trained men who would be able to provide the leadership which would be required if guerrilla warfare started.…  I started to make a study of the art of war and revolution and, whilst abroad, underwent a course in military training. If there was to be guerrilla warfare, I wanted to be able to stand and fight with my people and to share the hazards of war with them. |

source: http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub\_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS010

Address by President Nelson Mandela to the Interfaith Commissioning Service for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

This is an excerpt of an address made by President Mandela in Cape Town, 13 February 1996.

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| All South Africans face the challenge of coming to terms with the past in ways which will enable us to face the future as a united nation at peace with itself. To you has been entrusted the particular task of dealing with gross violations of human rights in a manner that ensures that the painful truth is laid bare and that justice is done to the victims within the capacity of our society and within the framework of the constitution and the law. By doing so, and by means of amnesty, your goal is to ensure lasting reconciliation.…  There is a view that the past is best forgotten. Some criticise us when we say that whilst we can forgive, we can never forget. They do not agree that perpetrators of human rights violations should make full disclosure and acknowledge what they have done before they can be granted amnesty. There are also those who urge interference in prosecutions in progress.  Even if politicians could agree to suppress the past in these ways, they would be mistaken in doing so. Ordinary South Africans are determined that the past be known, the better to ensure that it is not repeated. They seek this, not out of vengeance, but so that we can move into the future together. The choice of our nation is not whether the past should be revealed, but rather to ensure that it comes to be known in a way which promotes reconciliation and peace. This will also impact on our ability to end violent crime and establish the rule of law, today.…  The Truth and Reconciliation Commission affords all South Africans an opportunity to participate in reconciliation and nation building. There is a role for community-based organisation and non-governmental organisations to play their part. There is a role, too, for individuals to make a contribution.  Perhaps the most important role player is not the politician or the commission, but the victim. Too often, victims have been neglected in our society. It is necessary that we identify the individuals who have suffered and their families, as well as communities. |

source: http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub\_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS346